

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 RSC-01 PER-01 SS-15 MMS-01 SP-02

ABF-01 /038 W

----- 111147

R 311204Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2524

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMEMBASSY DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 349

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: XF, LE, APER, BEXP

SUBJ: ROLE AND STAFFING OF REGIONAL TRADE DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE (RTDO)

REF: STATE 15785

1. SUMMARY. EMBASSY DAMASCUS HAS FOUND RTDO OF INVALUABLE
ASSISTANCE DURING EFFORTS OF PAST YEAR TO REESTABLISH
AMERICAN COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY IN SYRIA. ITS SERVICE HAS
RANGED FROM THE SMALL SUCH AS ASSISTANCE IN TRADE
OPPORTUNITIES TO THE BIG SUCH AS SUPPORT IN DAMASCUS
INTERNATIONAL FAIR. RTDO'S HELP WAS VITAL TO OUR PROGRAMS
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LAST YEAR. END SUMMARY

2. DAMASCUS IS IN UNIQUE SITUATION VIS-A-VIS BEIRUT. AS IS WELL KNOWN, BEIRUT IS LOCATION OF LARGE NUMBER OF REGIONAL OFFICES OF AMERICAN FIRMS. THERE ARE NO SUCH OFFICES IN SYRIA: MOST OF THOSE IN BEIRUT COVER SYRIA. CONSEQUENTLY, TRADE OPPORTUNITIES, TRADE COMPLAINTS, GENERAL ASSISTANCE, AND OTHER ROUTINE EMBASSY COMMERCIAL WORK IS OFTEN DONE VIA PHONE OR VISITS WITH AMERICAN COMPANIES LOCATED IN BEIRUT. WE DRAW HEAVILY ON RTDO IN BEIRUT FOR ASSISTANCE.

3. IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION OF RTDO WAS DRAMATICALLY UNDERSCORED WHEN USG MADE DECISION TO PARTICIPATE IN DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL FAIR. RTDO WAS IN DAILY CONTACT WITH AMERICAN FIRMS 1) TO RECRUIT THEM FOR FAIR, 2) TO ASSIST IN DESIGNING AND CONSTRUCTION OF THEIR EXHIBITS, 3) TO HELP COORDINATE SHIPPING TO SYRIA, AND 4) TO BACKSTOP EMBASSY IN ARRANGING APPOINTMENTS AND SPECIAL VIEWING DAYS FOR COMPANY OFFICIALS WITH SARG GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. DAMASCUS FAIR WAS SUCCESS BECAUSE THERE WAS IN RTDO PERSON WHO KNEW AMERICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY WELL AND WHO COULD DEVOTE LONG HOURS IN ASSISTING COMPANIES FOR PROGRAM THEY WOULD BE PARTICIPATING IN OUTSIDE LEBANON.

4. OUR RECOMMENDATION WOULD BE TO STRENGTHEN RTDO BY ASSIGNING ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL AND BROADENING NOT RESTRICTING ITS RESPONSIBILITIES. WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE RTDO TAKE BIGGER ROLE IN ORGANIZING REGIONAL TRADE PROMOTION EVENTS PARTICULARLY EXHIBITS, MISSIONS AND CATALOGUE SHOWS. CERTAINLY REGIONAL OFFICE COULD PULL SUCH MISSIONS TOGETHER AND HELP ORGANIZE THEIR REGIONAL TRAVEL. BELIEVE RTDO SHOULD BECOME MORE THE ADMINISTRATOR/ ORGANIZER FOR REGION.

3. FURTHER, BELIEVE IT INVALUABLE TO HAVE OFFICE IN BEIRUT WITH REGIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES. NORMAL COMMERCIAL WORK IN LEBANON SHOULD REMAIN CLEARLY DEFINED AS RESPONSIBILITY OF COMMERCIAL ATTACHE, BUT HE SHOULD NOT ALSO HAVE TO TAKE ON ADDED REQUIREMENT OF BACK CONFIDENTIAL

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STOPPING OTHER COUNTRY PROGRAMS. IT IS IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, THAT WE DO HAVE BACKSTOPPING AND WE HAVE BEEN SATISFIED WITH ROLE PRESENTLY BEING PLAYED BY RTDO. DURING HIS ABSENCE FROM BEIRUT WE HAVE FELT DEFINITE LETDOWN IN SUPPORT AND ASSUME THEREFORE HE SHOULD HAVE AN AMERICAN ASSISTANT.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: johnsorg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975DAMASC00349
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750036-0548
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975014/aaaaacsi.tel
Line Count: 114
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: 75 STATE 15785
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: johnsorg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 JUL 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <20 NOV 2003 by johnsorg>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ROLE AND STAFFING OF REGIONAL TRADE DEVELOPMENT OFFICE (RTDO)
TAGS: APER, BEXP, XF, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006